

8.16

Gabriel the Angel

Gabriel is best known today for his New Testament appearances in the Gospel of Luke.

- He appears to Zechariah the priest in the temple to announce the birth of his son, the future John the Baptist (Luke 1:11–20).
- He appears to Mary the virgin in Nazareth to announce the birth of her son, the future Jesus Christ (Luke 1:26–38).

Gabriel would already have been well known to most of Luke's readers, because of his role in the Old Testament book of Daniel.

- He comes in human form to explain the significance of a vision Daniel has had (Dan. 8:15–26).
- He comes again to give Daniel special wisdom and understanding (Dan. 9:21–27).

In all of these cases, Gabriel functions primarily as a messenger from God. In 1 Enoch, a nonbiblical Jewish writing, Gabriel is assigned many duties.

- He is one of the “glorious ones” who watch over humanity (1 Enoch 40:3–10).

- He is one of four select angels who bring the prayers of martyrs to God's attention (1 Enoch 9:1–11).
- He is the angel who will cast the wicked into the fiery furnace at the Last Judgment.

Notably, in 1 Enoch and similar writings, Gabriel is typically referred to as an "archangel," though in the Bible that term is applied only to Michael (Jude 9).

In church tradition, Gabriel came to be identified as the angel or archangel whose trumpet blast will announce the return of Christ (Matt. 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16). In Islam, Gabriel is identified as the angel who dictated the Koran to Mohamed.